# **Crime Victims' Institute**



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### From the Director:

As the 2013 Texas Legislative Session nears, the work of the Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) at Sam Houston State University should be important in a number of issues that will be considered. While there is always concern over budgets and revenues and many state agencies are striving to maintain resources, the importance of victim services, programs, and policies cannot be understated. One of the major goals of CVI's work is to provide the research evidence to help guide policy-making related to victim issues. Much of the recent research conducted by the Institute has focused on the broad consequences of victimization. Described in further detail on the following pages, one line of research at the Institute assesses the costs of victimization to victims, family members, and to society more generally. One study soon to be published in a special issue of the journal, Justice Quarterly, highlights the numerous long-term physical and mental health consequences of experiencing childhood victimization.

The direct experiences of pain, injury, and suffering that crime victims face are undeniable, but it is also important to recognize the numerous potential long-term consequences that may also occur. Victims may face chronic physical and mental health problems, as well as interruptions to their educational attainment and/or employment, reduced earnings, and subsequent public health issues like additional victimization and homelessness. Access to effective victim services is a crucial resource for victims not only in addressing the immediate trauma they have experienced, but also in ameliorating some of the longer-term and more widespread adverse effects to themselves and to society. The benefit that victim service agencies throughout the state provide to the citizens of Texas is invaluable. These agencies are dedicated to serving and representing some of the most vulnerable members of our communities, and in the long run, their work will have benefits not just for the victims they serve, but for all of us.

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Leana A. Bouffard, Ph.D. Director, Crime Victims' Institute

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Did you know that 12.7 million people are physically abused, raped or stalked by their partners in one year? That's more than double the population of the five largest cities in Texas combined (Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, Austin, and Forth Worth). Now there's a new symbol that says NO MORE. Check out NOMORE.org on Facebook and at <u>www.nomore.org</u>. Join us at CVI and say NO MORE to domestic violence and sexual assault.

**NORE** TOGETHER WE CAN END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & SEXUAL ASSAULT

#### Our Mission

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to :

- Conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- Improve services to victims
- Assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- Inform victim-related policymaking at the state and local levels.

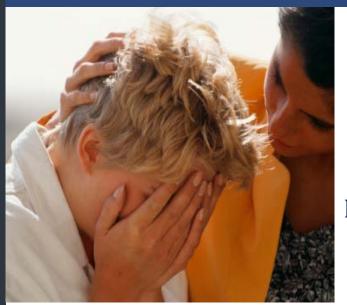


Published by The Crime Victims' Institute College of Criminal Justice Sam Houston State University

#### Focus on: Maria Koeppel CVI Graduate Assistant

Maria is in her third year of the Ph.D. program at Sam Houston State University. She hails from Iowa where she received her Bachelor of Arts degrees in Criminal Justice and Spanish and her Master of Arts degree in Criminology. Her research areas of interest include sociological aspects, such as gender and sexual orientation, and victimization. Currently, she is working with the Crime Victims' Institute where she has worked on projects examining shortand long-term consequences of victimization. Recently, she represented CVI at the International Family Violence and Child Victimization Research Conference where she presented research on sexual orientation and the adverse effects of intimate partner violence. Maria will soon play a large role as the research assistant on a grantfunded project for CVI. The project, in collaboration with Lone Star Legal Aid and Texas A&M's Public Policy Research Institute and funded by Office of Victims of Crime (OVC), will assess the needs of crime victims for legal services and will develop a demonstration project to provide those services.





## Examining the Issues

## Consequences of Bullying Victimization

Adverse consequences associated with victimization vary significantly across individuals and impact not only the individual victim. but also their families, friends, and surrounding communities. Additionally, these consequences may be short- and/or long-term, and physical, emotional, and/or mental. Understanding these consequences is important not only for assessing the impact crime has on its victims and society, but also for determining how to respond more effectively to crime victims. Victimization research conducted by the Crime Victims' Institute during the past vear has examined several forms of victimization and the associated consequences, including the long-term adverse effects of bullying victimization and how those negative consequences are issues of concern in a public health framework.

Our research has found that having experienced early victimization, especially repeated bullying, is associated with more negative perceptions of general health and mental health, higher rates of emotional/mental or behavior problems that interfere with school and/or work, and suffering from an eating disorder. Victims of bullying were also more likely to smoke and smoked more cigarettes per day than nonvictims and were also more likely to experience subsequent violent victimization and homelessness. These results indicate that victimization that occurs early in life, especially bullying victimization, may have significant and substantial physical and mental health consequences for the victims later in life.

In addition to understanding the consequences associated with victimization, especially being the victim of bullying, it is important to view these adverse effects from a broader public health perspective. For example, the effects of early victimization on subsequent experiences of victimization and homelessness later in life were significant. These experiences may serve as potential conduits to further adverse physical and mental health outcomes, including substance use, lack of health insurance, and mental health issues. Victimization is linked to increased tobacco and alcohol use, which may lead to mouth, lung, colon, or throat cancer, alcoholism, liver disease, and hypertension, among other physical health problems. Depression, anxiety, and suicide are also linked to these experiences. Although these may seem like individual problems, they are public health issues due to the cost to society and communities in the form of social welfare, lost employment and productivity, and increased expense of health care. Victim services that address both the shortand long-term consequences of victimization not only help the victims, but also have a beneficial impact on the wider community.



#### In the Works....

In the coming year, CVI will serve as a research partner, along with Texas A&M's Public Policy Research Institute, to Lone Star Legal Aid on a project to develop a model program that will expand legal assistance and restorative services available to victims in Texas and nationwide. The project is funded by a grant awarded by the Office of Victims of Crime (OVC), U.S. Department of Justice.

#### Look for upcoming publications from the Crime Victims' Institute on:

- School Districts' Implementation of Teen Dating Violence Legislation
- Differences in Education/Employment Status and Intimate Partner Victimization
- Victimization Among Asian Immigrants
- Crime Victims Compensation Fund
- Dating Safety and Victimization in Traditional and Online Relationships
- Awareness and Use of Sex Offender Registries
- Stalking Update 2012

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#### Let's discuss it:

In 2011, Texas legislators passed House Bill 1942, which requires school districts to change the way they address the problem of bullying. This new law, which goes into effect for the 2012-2013 school year was designed to encourage more proactive responses to bullying and to improve the consistency of that response across school districts. With a specific definition of bullying that includes written or verbal forms as well as cyber-bullying, school districts are required to develop and implement policy that prohibits bullying, specifies procedures for reporting, investigation, notification, and discipline, and establishes counseling options and other remedies for victims. Prior to this law, the victim was typically the student transferred to another classroom or campus. HB 1942 allows school officials to transfer the student who engaged in the bullying rather than the victim. As this policy is being implemented across the state, the Crime Victims' Institute is interested in your questions and observations on this important issue. Please contact us with your input at: crimevictims@shsu.edu



## Upcoming Events

## Share your ideas:

We welcome your input. Please send issues or topics you would like to see CVI conduct research on to : crimevictims@shsu.edu



American Society of Criminology Chicago, IL	11/14-17/12
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault Austin, TX	03/04-07/12
Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Dallas, TX	03/19-23/13

October - Domestic Violence Awareness Month



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